6 Garioch: Inverurie, Insch, Newton

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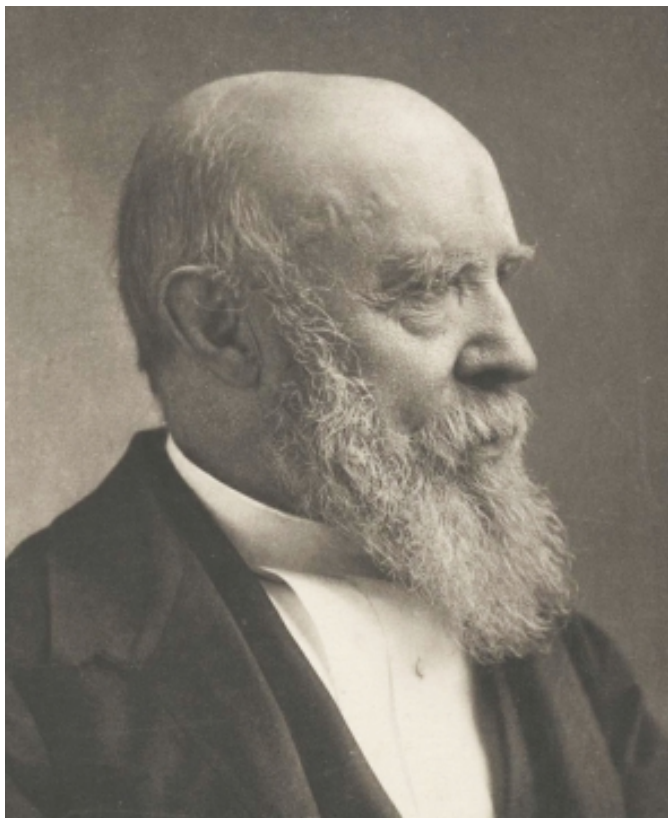
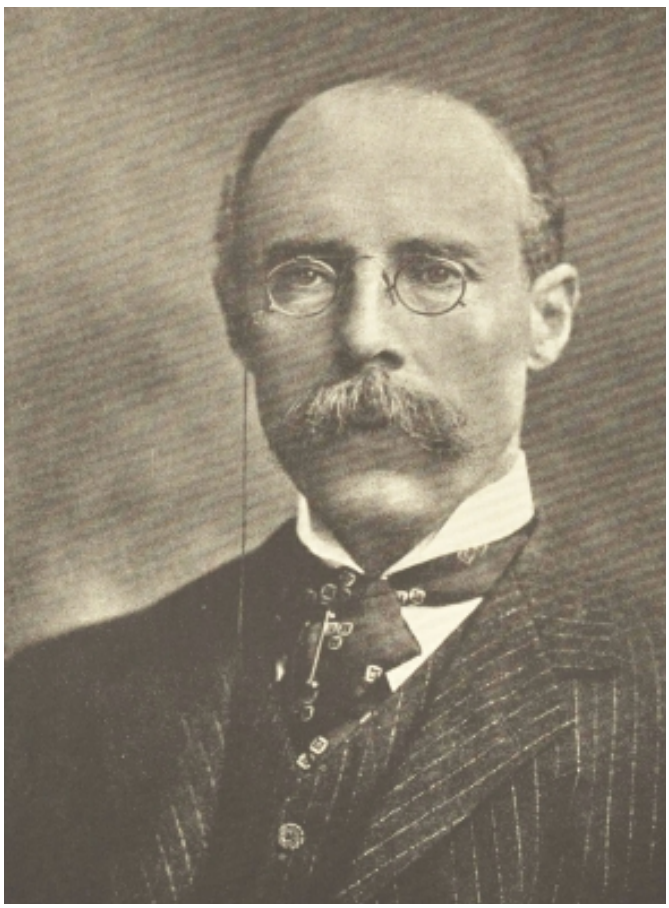
The Garioch: This ancient region of Aberdeenshire holds a mass of Davidson history. The small towns and villages are located in an area where farming still dominates the lives of many people and to a greater extent the landscape. We have included just a fraction of the information we have; some of these families are linked with those of the neighbouring area of Formartine.

Revd John Davidson, 1816–1892, was born and educated in Aberdeen. He later served as minister at Inverurie from the 1840s until his death over 50 years later. He is buried in the cemetery at Inverurie located at the Bass

He published an anthology of historical notes and genealogies about the people of the Garioch entitled *"Inverurie and the Earldom of the Garioch"* in 1878. This useful book contains many Davidson historical references and puts them into context with the other families of the Garioch.



Revd John Davidson



Andrew Davidson

Revd John Davidson and his wife, Mary Bisset, raised a large family one of whom was **Andrew Davidson, 1860–1926**. Andrew Davidson enjoyed a successful career as an advocate in Aberdeen, as did his son Donald Arbuthnot Davidson.

The Bass, at Inverurie.
This Motte is one two surviving medieval fortifications on this site which also includes some early Pictish stones.

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Betty Cosgrove, an active Clan Davidson Association member, has researched the many strands of her Davidson ancestry from this area for some years. She knows the parishes well, and has investigated kirkyards, parish records, oral history, family letters and records, local history societies and regional archives on a very wide scale. She has picked up material from the Cooper family in Insch, and likewise shared all her own material.

Betty also knows much about the local farming practices, and the regional social traditions.

Her family can certainly be traced back to **Patrick Davidson, 1700–1772**, who was a Tacksman, from Scotstown, Insch.
The scale of her findings is enormous and includes generations of Davidsons from the farms and parishes around Insch, including Clatt, and Kennethmont.

Insch Church:
There is an important collection of Davidson headstones in this Kirkyard.

Betty Cosgrove

Jean Davidson

Dunnydeer Hill, Insch with its ancient Castle remains.

Anne Davidson

Arthur Davidson RN

Alexander Davidson of the Cairnbrogie Davidson family purchased Newton House near Culsalmond from the Gordon family sometime in the 17th century

This Alexander Davidson, like his father, was an Aberdeen advocate. He died in 1665. Several further generations of Davidsons lived at this house.

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Newton House today

The current house was originally built in approximately 1692 and still survives as an impressive private residence. We assume the Davidson family rebuilt this house. You can just glimpse this house through the trees as you drive up the A96 from Inverurie to Huntly.

A descendant of the Davidsons of Newton was **Lord George Gordon Byron 1788–1824**, the famous poet. Alexander Davidson of Newton born in 1707 changed his name to Gordon of Gight, his mother's maiden surname. Byron was a great grandson of this Davidson [see Section 2]. Some of his kinsmen were buried in the private mausoleum which is located nearby Newton House.

The Reverend Patrick Davidson's family of Rayne, had long roots of ancestry in Aberdeenshire, and left a major family memorial in the Kirkton of Rayne graveyard.

The three separate Memorial inscriptions are all readable and provide significant information about the family.

This same Davidson family shared its Davidson ancestry with the Davidson family of **Kennethmont & Insch**.

Davidson memorial at Rayne

This family were linked by marriage to the Leslies of nearby Wartle (*see below*) and also to the Davidsons of Inchmarlo on Deeside [see Section 4].

Walter Stevenson Davidson

Walter Stevenson Davidson [1785–1869] Born and buried at Rayne.

Walter Davidson, the youngest son of Rev. Patrick Davidson, was a successful businessman and banker in London, Australia, and the Far East. He sold the Inchmarlo estate, on Deeside to the Davidsons of Tillychetly & Dess in 1838.

Walter played a major role in Anglo Australia agricultural property development, but at the cost of personal relationships with members of the related Leslie family who were running some of the property in Australia.

Jane Davidson, daughter of Revd Patrick Davidson the Minister of Rayne, married William Leslie of Wartle & Little Folla in 1813. One of their sons, **Patrick Leslie**, went out to Australia and later became a successful pioneer farmer and pastoralist, opening up the Canning Downs area of northern New South Wales. He has been described as "prince of the bushmen" for his ability to thrive in the adverse conditions. Earlier he had been severely criticised and blamed by his uncle Walter S. Davidson for financial mismanagement on the farms his uncle owned.

One of their daughters, **Mary Ann Leslie, married Dr Patrick Davidson of Inchmarlo** in 1836 [see Section 4].

Patrick Leslie

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Wartle House today:
Originally built in the 17th Century
Still held by the Leslie family today

Colonel John Irvine Davidson:
First C.O. of the 48th Highlanders

John Irvine Davidson, 1854–1910, was born at Meikle Wartle, son of Dr. Samuel Davidson MD. He was a successful business man in London and Toronto, who had experience serving in the London Scottish Regiment and other Yeomanry regiments, before being approached to be the Commanding Officer of the proposed **48th Highlanders in Toronto**. He played an important part in the formation of this militia unit in 1891, until his retirement in 1898. This unit still exists in Toronto, having won battle honours in the Boer War, both World Wars, the Korean War, and served in many peace keeping roles since then.

Cap Badge on a Davidson Tartan background

The unit initially wore a Davidson tartan. The regiment is now named the 48th Highlanders of Canada; it forms an important part of the Reserve Forces of Canada, while its distinguished pipe band is frequently heard.

Provost William Davidson purchased Midmar Castle in about 1760. His son James Davidson inherited the Castle in 1765 and eventually it passed to James' daughter Margaret who sold it after her marriage in 1795.

The castle dates back to 1570–75 and has had a difficult history with many different owners. It was uninhabited from 1842 until 1977, when eventually it was restored as a private house. It is one of the largest of Aberdeenshire's many historic houses.

Today the Castle has been restored and is part of a large farming estate which specializes in deer farming. It is not open to the public.

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Midmar Castle 2008

Midmar Castle 1885

John Davidson, *c.*1750–1824, was a successful Advocate in Aberdeen. He was the son of a farmer from Footie, Kincardine O'Neil. He purchased **Kebbaty** in 1792 and rebuilt the house approximately as we see it today. This private house is not one of the grand houses of Aberdeenshire like nearby Midmar Castle; it is a plain, harled country house which has survived.

Kebbatty House today

We have learnt much about John Davidson and his family from his 56 page Testament and 28 page Inventory, which provide an extraordinary level of detail about many of his family, who are named and whose relationship is also detailed. These documents also include reference links to the Davidsons of Tillychetly [see Section 4].

This Davidson family appear to have had a family enclosure at the **Midmar Old Kirk**, but we are still not clear which members of the family are buried there.

John Davidson was succeeded by his son William Davidson, but by the time of William's death in 1864, the Kebbaty property was no longer occupied by the family.

Dr Samuel Davidson MD, 1812–1895 had a wide ranging country practice based in the Garioch for many decades throughout the 19th century. His ancestry was from a long line of Davidson farmers from the Tarves area. He was very well known and loved by his patients. He and his wife raised a large family at their home which still stands at Meikle Wartle. Two of his sons had distinguished careers [see above and in Section 7]. Several of our CDA members are descendants of this family.

Dr Samuel Davidson MD

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Davidson Arms at the Logie-Durno Kirkyard. Hidden away just off the A96 between Inverurie and Huntly is the old kirkyard of Logie-Durno which includes a major family enclosure for the Dalrymple Horn Elphinstone family. Margaret Davidson, the sole heiress of Midmar Castle when it was held by the Davidson family in later half of the 18th century, was married to James Dalrymple Horn Elphinstone. He died at sea in 1798 whilst returning from Lisbon, leaving a young widow. She organised the building of the family enclosure and the armorial monumental inscription which includes a Davidson shield superimposed on her husband's family arms.

Davidson Arms superimposed on the Elphinstone Arms